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ANALYSIS OF POLISH TRADE-UNION ELECTION RETURNS

Zygmunt Kratko

To achieve the tasks of the Six-Year Plan, trade unions must achieve complete organizational efficiency. They must overcome the remnants of social democratism and "trade unionism" which have had a negative influence on the method of operations of the union organizations.

A study of trade-union activities shows that the higher echelons have broken away from the factories. This break is due to a lack of control on the part of union members over the union authorities, nonattendance of these authorities at meetings, lack of reporting, and disregard for the criticism of the masses.

The Sixth Plenum of the CRZZ (Central Council of Trade Unions) resolved to conduct a reporting and election campaign in all the trade unions. The resolution of the CRZZ Plenum governing the elections emphasized the principle of democracy within trade unions and recommended that the composition of union authorities be changed to include more nonparty laborers and white-collar workers, more women, young people, and technicians. The Sixth Plenum also emphasized the necessity of heeding the criticism of the masses to get ideas for further activities. The plenum exhorted the entire activist group to combat regimentation and administrative pressure and indicated that persuasion and indoctrination were to be the only methods used in union activities. It also called attention to the fact that hostile elements will take advantage of mistakes and endeavor to create worker opposition to the government's policy.

For the first time in the history of the trade-union movement in Poland, the plenum resolved to carry out elections in all trade unions simultaneously, in three stages: elections within union groups; elections for factory division, factory, and nonindustrial councils; and elections for regional and industrial branch administrations.

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The elections are almost completed. With the exception of the Miners' Trade Union, the ZZK (Railroad Workers' Trade Union), and the Trade Unions of the Printing, Press, and Publications Workers, where elections are now in progress, elections in union groups and elections for factory councils have been completed, and the regional elections are almost completed.

According to incomplete returns, 488,883 union activists were elected in the following categories: 141,874 social insurance delegates, 123,094 social welfare inspectors, and 53,384 organizers of cultural and indoctrination projects.

A study of the composition of the activist group shows that only 21 percent of the former trusted representatives have been reelected, while 79 percent are new union activists, including many shockworkers, rationalizers, and outstanding white-collar workers.

The proportion of nonparty members increased to 58 percent, the proportion of women increased from 19 to 24 percent, and the proportion of young people from 6 to 15 percent. About 2,985,363 members or 70 percent of the total union membership, participated in the elections and about 497,427 participated in the discussions. A total of 20,835 factory and nonindustrial councils were elected, and 5,743 factory division councils. The number of council members amounts to 192,275.

Only 15 percent of the former council members were reelected. The proportion of nonparty members in the councils increased from 37.8 percent to 49 percent, the proportion of women from 12.7 percent to 22 percent, and the proportion of young people from 4.4 to 12.7 percent.

Attendance at election meetings and conferences fluctuated between 52 and 85 percent (56 percent among chemical workers, 56 percent among postal workers, 85 percent among power workers, 75 percent among metal products workers, and 80 percent among miners). Between 3.5 to 27 percent of those present participated in discussions (metalworkers 4 percent, chemists 11 percent, transportation workers 23 percent, clothing workers 27 percent, and smelting and foundry workers 3.5 percent).

Excluding the ZNP (Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego, Polish Teachers' Union) and parts of the ZZK and the Union of Printing, Press and Publication Workers, 681,000 activists were elected in the factories in Poland, besides members of various commissions, womens' councils, administrations of athletic groups, administrations of welfare and loan agencies, and factory clubs, which means that every sixth worker is an activist.

Taking into account the fact that the proportion of nonparty members is highest among social insurance delegates, public welfare inspectors, and organizers of cultural and indoctrination projects, nonparty members constitute the majority of the newly elected activists in the factories. Nonparty members may be estimated at 60-65 percent. The job of welfare inspector, social insurance delegate, trusted representative, or council member very often is a man's first assignment in social work. This indicates the important role of trade unions as a school for the indoctrination of social activists and a training center for cadres.

About 2,985,363 members took part in the election of trusted representatives and more than 2,500,000 in the election of factory council members. The participation of hundreds of thousands of persons in the discussions creates an impression that these meetings are a sort of mass training center for management.

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According to incomplete reports, 119,203 new members joined the unions during the election campaign. This includes 25,000 in the Construction Workers' Union, 15,000 in the Tradesmen's Union, 5,518 in the Metalworkers' Union, and 11,948 in the Clothing and Leather Goods Workers' Union. Increased receipts of membership dues also indicate the growing strength of trade unions.

During the campaign, the tie between the higher echelons of union organization and the factory was strengthened. This permitted the higher authorities to get a clearer insight into factory problems. Many grievances came to light at the meetings. These can be ironed out with the assistance of the factory management.

The campaign brought to light the changes which have taken place in the working classes in Poland. The feeling of responsibility toward the factory and the country has deepened. During the campaign, pledges were made and suggestions offered for the improvement of work organization in industry and the elimination of waste.

There were many shortcomings in the election which should be sharply criticized to avoid repetition in the next election. Insufficient importance was attached to the election of trusted representatives and to the reports of trusted representatives. There were many instances of trusted representatives elected en masse at a general meeting (Construction Workers, Finance Workers, Chemical Workers), or summarily appointed (Pabianice-Wloknio). Some trusted representatives made no report or announced that there was nothing to report. The resolution of 21 March 1951, of the CRZZ Secretariat, reported this state of affairs to the main administrations. In many instances, the election was repeated. As the campaign progressed these defects decreased.

In some factories, pressure was used, contrary to regulations, to assure attendance (e.g., Laska Woolen Mills, Szczakowa Cement Plant, Lignica Clothing Factory -- Division "A").

There were instances of disregard for democratic practices within the union and disregard for the will of the masses. Prepared lists were submitted (e.g., Struga Textile Plant in Lodz, factory in Boryszewo, Szczakowa Cement Plant; "Swit" (Association of Forest Wardens) in Opole). Candidates were awarded elections without the required minimum of votes by forcing the winning opponents to decline the mandate (e.g., clothing and leather goods workers in Bydgoszcz and textile workers in Ozorkow). There were instances of falsifying the count through pressure on the election examining board at the "Ninth of May" PZPB in Lodz and the Cultural Workers' and Artists' Union. Persons other than delegates were permitted to attend election meetings at the Textile Workers' Union in Lodz.

Pre-election reports at meetings were very inadequate. The policies were not well thought out and discussions were limited to factory tasks and did not emphasize the role of the trade-union organization in the realization of these tasks.

Due to the intervention of the union authorities and the assistance of party organizations, later reports at meetings showed a more definite policy, but even at this stage, the general political problems and the problems within the factory were not coordinated closely enough. Each appeared as a separate problem having no connection with the other.

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There is lack of interest in cementing the bond between the workers and peasants. The task of tightening this bond has not been assigned to a given group. The problem of class struggle, the struggle against hostile elements, and the problem of revolutionary vigilance have not been adequately covered. Discussions emphasized interest in production, work organization, expansion of work competition by pledges, elimination of goldbricking, revision of norms, and reduction of waste.

The problems of safety measures in industry (lighting, ventilation, and especially protective clothing) were strongly emphasized in the discussions. One of the most essential topics discussed was the disregard of labor laws and collective agreements by managements (e.g., Krasnik Brick Plant, Poznan Municipal Electric Railway, Elblag Power Plant). So far, unions have shown insufficient interest in the enforcement of labor legislation.

In social welfare matters, the present system of coal distribution, and lack of trade-union interest in nurseries and nursery schools were vigorously criticized. There were many complaints against the improper allocation of cinema tickets and reservations at workers' vacation resorts.

There were also complaints against the system of distribution, favoritism, and lack of public control in stores. The necessity of increasing the effort against speculators was indicated. All these problems and others not mentioned here should be studied in detail and, wherever possible, eliminated.

The elections brought to light serious defects in the operations of the union apparatus and activists groups, particularly the lack of adequate and systematic political indoctrination. The laws, decrees, and resolutions of the government of Poland are in most cases not well known to the general public, or else they reach it via hostile interpretation. The union activists are not familiar with Poland's labor laws, which are patterned on the Soviet laws. The Factory Fund has not been adequately publicized. The cultural and educational programs do not reach all the workers, the ideological propaganda is still in its infancy, and the clubrooms are not being utilized to the fullest extent. There was a general clamor for training or education, but to date the schools and courses have not been fully utilized.

A serious defect is the lack of adequate personnel for the upper union echelons, the factory councils, and also the lack of a well-planned system of work organization. Very often, instructors in the area deal only with the head of the factory council and seldom have any contact with the union members.

The elections proved conclusively that the weakest link in the entire union system is the intermediate link -- the regional, or industrial branch organization -- whose raison d'etre is its association with the factory. Therefore, it is imperative to analyze accurately the organization of each union, the aim of every intermediate link, and to establish efficient methods of operation.

The elections brought to light the fact that the heads of activists' groups do not realize the importance of ideological activities, that there is a lack of interest in self-improvement, and that responsibility for work assigned is not appreciated. Lack of vigilance against hostile activities was reflected in the reports of the main administrations to the Central Council of Trade Unions.

The following conclusions have been reached as a result of the election campaign activities:

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1. The union organizations ought to study the grievances and requests brought up by workers at meetings, analyze them, assign the job of adjusting the matter, establish a target date, and report on the results before a meeting of union groups. Even when the grievances or requests seem unjustified, they ought to be discussed with the group and an explanation given as to why they are not justified. The adjustment of grievances should be communicated to the workers by radio or bulletin board and also explained at the factory or factory division meetings.

The upper union echelon (regional and main administration) ought follow through to see that grievances are adjusted and should assist the factory councils in the task.

The adjustment of grievances and requests discussed at the election meetings is one of the most important tasks of all union organizations.

2. A system ought to be worked out which would give the upper union echelons a systematic chain of command over the lower echelons, allowing them to direct the union activities, without infringing on the initiative of the lower echelons. The main administrations ought to hold regional meetings each month at regular intervals assigning concrete tasks to be performed in the succeeding period. In turn, the regions ought to hold monthly meetings of the factory councils, and the latter should hold meetings of factory division councils and trusted representatives.

In the factory, separate meetings should be called for trusted representatives, social insurance delegates, social welfare inspectors, and organizers of cultural and indoctrination projects. The activities of factory, nonindustrial, and factory division councils ought to be defined. A plan of action for the factory council ought to be worked out and the topics for discussion assigned.

CRZZ inspection of factories 2-3 months after election day showed that not one meeting had been held for trusted representatives, social insurance delegates, social welfare inspectors, or cultural and indoctrination project organizers, and no tasks had been assigned them.

The revised edition of union by-laws which will be out shortly will be of great help in the proper organization of the activities of factory activists. Glos Pracy (Voice of Labor) which usually devotes much space to the problems of union groups and at present is carrying on conferences by correspondence with trusted representatives, may also be of help. Since the main purpose of Glos Pracy is to assist the factory organizations, it is imperative that the factory activists read this publication and refer their problems and difficulties to it.

3. The same serious attention should be given to the care of the worker, the youth, the worker's family, and working women as is given to the recruitment of crews for production achievement.

4. The next important task of the union activists is to intensify vigilance, combat manifestations of hostile activities, and unmask hostile propaganda as a tool of American imperialists. The entire activist group, party and nonparty, must be impressed with the idea that the enemy will endeavor to hamper Poland's industrialization because it considers every achievement a blow to imperialism.

5. The activists must become a well-informed group of defenders of people's Poland with love for their country and pride in its achievements. They must be brought up in the spirit of international solidarity and, in the spirit of love and attachment to the great USSR.

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The election proved the importance of the trade unions as a liaison between the party and the masses in Poland. All activists must realize that activities in the union are political activities. They will be modeled on the party methods and should be critically analyzed under party direction.

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